

Local Newspapers and their Relationship with Presidential Candidates: A Content Analysis of
the 2004 Presidential Campaign in Ohio

A Senior Honors Thesis

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Abstract

Background and objectives: Ohio has been the focus of much attention as a battleground state in recent presidential elections; however, little is known about the relationship that exists between the candidates and the local media in such states. The purpose of this study is to examine this relationship in regard to the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign in Ohio.

This study applies issue ownership theory which emphasizes the role of campaigns in establishing the criteria that voters use to choose between the candidates. This theory expects candidates to emphasize issues on which they are advantaged and their opponents are less favorably viewed. To explain voters' response, this theory invokes the theory of framing. Framing theory expects that while frames often provide no new information with respect to a particular issue, they instruct the public on how to weigh the conflicting political messages that enter into daily political discussions. Put simply, issue ownership theory attempts to predict what issues the candidates will focus on and framing theory explains the level of importance voters assign to these issues.

Based on the issue ownership theory and on data collected by the Pew Research Center in 2004 which found that Americans believed President Bush was more capable of handling foreign policy issues while Senator Kerry's strength was domestic policy, it is expected that each candidate will attempt to frame the election around the issues the public views as his strength. In regard to the print media, it is expected that the framing of political issues in the newspapers will follow partisan voting trends. That is, newspapers in rural, traditionally-Republican areas will frame political issues as President Bush does in his Ohio speeches and vice versa for newspapers in urban, traditionally-Democratic areas.

Content analyses of news coverage of political issues and campaign events, specifically candidate speeches, are analyzed to test these hypotheses.

Initial results do not support the hypotheses. Interestingly, the study found that political dialogue was focused predominately on domestic issues with respect to both candidates and the rural and urban newspapers. However, such findings are not meant to suggest a direct relationship between the print media and the candidates. In fact, the study found little evidence to support any relationship beyond mere focus similarities.

Going beyond such similarities, the study found that while the candidates and the newspapers were both focused on domestic issues, neither was focused on the same issues. In fact, the issues being framed as most important by the candidates were not the same ones being framed as most important by the print media. This is also true in regard to Ohio's importance within the political discourse. The study found that while the print media discussed political issues as they related to Ohio, the candidates focused more on national issues, using Ohio as more of a backdrop for political discussion rather than a centerpiece for such discourse.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Every four years as candidates travel the country and the media's focus turns to presidential politics, Americans gear up for another opportunity to decide who will be the next president of the United States. The public is expected to amass the information they have been given by the media and the candidates themselves and make an informed decision about who is best equipped to lead the nation. But, with such importance placed on the information disseminated by the media, as well as the candidates, to what extent does the information from one source align itself with the other? That is, are the candidates and the media focusing on similar issues or is each source framing the election around divergent problems, leaving the public unsure what issues are most important for the country?

Recent American elections have been notable for the limited nature of the campaigns. Many states are solidly "red," that is, places where the Republican enjoys a large advantage and where both campaigns judge that nothing will change that. Other states are solidly "blue" in which the Democratic candidate is solidly ahead to the extent that the state is not contested. Battleground states are those which both parties judge contestable. In other words, they are the ones in play as each side hopes to add them to their solid base of support in the red or blue ranks. Although Ohio has tended to elect Republican governors over most of the past several decades and the GOP has dominated many statewide offices and the Legislature, both national political parties have judged Ohio to be central to their chances of winning the presidency.

While it is arguable that much voting occurs down party lines, battleground states are so defined because of the diversity of partisanship – a close division between Democrats and Republicans and a sect of voters uncommitted to a particular party or candidate. The Electoral College is thus important to the targeting of voters and setting the background in which certain

battleground states become the focus of national attention. Presidential candidates have incentives to concentrate their energy and resources in such strategic areas (Bartels 1985; Brams and Davis 1974; Colantoni, Levesque, and Ordeshook 1975). Although much attention has been given to such battleground states, little attention has been given to understanding the relationship that exists between the candidates and the local media with respect to the framing of the election in these states. Ohio has been the focus of much attention as one such battleground state in recent presidential elections. This study analyzes the extent to which the presidential election is framed differently by the media and the candidates. That is, does a relationship exist between the political issues the media frames as most critical to the election and those the candidates frame as such?

Understanding the relationship between the candidates' framing and that of the media is important because for the ordinary citizen, attending to mass-media communication is the principal means he or she becomes acquainted with politics and develops opinions on a wide range of issues (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Through their relationship with the mass-media, the public comes into regular contact with the media's issue framing which serves as the bridge between "elite discourse" about an issue and the public's comprehension of that issue (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). Through content analysis, this study analyzes the issue framing power of rural and urban Ohio newspapers in cities where President Bush and Senator Kerry spoke during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign in relation to the candidates' issue framing within their public addresses in these areas. Drawing upon issue framing and issue ownership theories, this study explores the political rhetoric in both the candidates' campaign speeches as well the political issue coverage in the rural and urban print media in the days after the candidate's visit.

To clarify what is meant by issue framing, this study is not only concerned with what political issues are taking center stage importance in the election, but also what is Ohio's role in the election. That is, while traveling throughout Ohio, do the candidates frame the specific issues in their speeches around Ohio? Is Ohio's role within the candidates' speeches merely a backdrop against which the candidates further their national agendas or is the political discourse within these public addresses Ohio-specific and vice versa in regard to print media and its issue framing?

Before beginning an analysis of the specific issue framing within the 2004 presidential campaign in Ohio, it is important to explain what issues are advantageous for the candidates to frame in their public addresses. The next section addresses the theoretical underpinnings and research pertaining to issue ownership and framing and the possible interplay between them, the candidates, and Ohio's print media.

Chapter 2: Concepts and Literature Review

This chapter introduces the concepts that will be the focus of this study, along with the relevant literature on issue framing, agenda-setting, and campaign coverage. Much of this study is developed with respect to the theories of issue ownership and issue framing. First, this study predicts which issues the candidates, and subsequently the media, will frame with the highest importance through the application of the issue ownership theory which expects candidates to emphasize the issues on which they are advantaged and their opponents are less regarded (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986, 1996; Holian 2004).

A Pew Research Center poll released October 4, 2004, “Kerry Wins Debate, But Little Change in Candidate Images” found that the public believed Senator Kerry was more capable of resolving domestic issues while President Bush’s strength was foreign policy (Pew Research Center 2004). Petrocik (1991, 1996) provides support for the argument that the Pew Center’s findings are not a new development. Instead, the public has long-standing beliefs that the Republican Party is more adept at resolving foreign policy issues than their opponents (Petrocik 1991, 1996). Based on these findings coupled with the understanding that a candidate’s goal is to achieve strategic advantage by elevating problems which reflect issue ownership to the forefront of the election, thus becoming the problems on which the voters will make their choice, this study theorizes that the candidates’ public addresses will be clearly divergent with respect to the issue focus (Petrocik 1991, 1996).

H1: Each candidate’s public statements will focus predominately on the issues the public perceived to be his strengths (President Bush, foreign affairs and Senator Kerry, domestic issues) as articulated by the Pew Research Center poll.

But the question remains: with the possibility for such divergent campaign focus, how will the print media frame the election?

While issue framing is an obvious aspect of political persuasion in respect to the candidates, it also surfaces more objectively within political news coverage. First, however, it is important to offer a brief conceptual understanding of the two faces of framing. Pan and Kosicki (1993) offer an understanding of both sects of framing: categories in the mind and devices in the news media. First, news media framing, as a cognitive process, is used in “information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving...” (Pan and Kosicki 1993). However, as a political discourse device used by the news media, framing has a strong influence in setting the “context for debate, defining the issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand” (Pan and Kosicki 1993).

Framing has such widespread use within the news media because it has been proven to influence opinion (Kinder and Sanders 1990, 1996). This power to influence opinion is twofold: (1) issue framing may affect the content of one’s beliefs; (2) it also affects the importance individuals attach to particular beliefs (Nelson, Oxley 1999). For the purpose of this study, the latter aspect of framing will be used.

Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) argue that issue frames affect opinion by enhancing the psychological importance, relevance, or weight given to specific beliefs with respect to particular issues. It is important to differentiate issue framing from priming because while issue framing may sometimes determine what is at the forefront of someone’s mind, its real influence on opinion is to establish which of the competing considerations vying to be at the forefront actually assume this cognitive priority (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). Thus, while frames often provide no new information with respect to a particular issue, they instruct the public about

how to weigh the conflicting political messages that enter into daily political discussions. Thus, framing is arguably key to the public's understanding of the most important issues at hand in the election

This study does not analyze the power of issue framing on public opinion, but instead analyzes the extent to which a relationship exists between the print media's and the candidates' issue framing in Ohio during the presidential campaign. This is an essential step in the process of tracing framing effects or understanding the framing process in the public arena (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) but is often assumed or overlooked by scholars. For instance, why do some issues become paramount within societal attention while others do not? Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) argue that it is not accurate to simply contend that some problems are more "marketable" than others; instead, issues exist together within public discourse until they are framed with respect to their importance. Because of the wide range of plausible issues around which to frame the election, it is important to understand the extent to which the print media and the candidates gave the same issues the same level of importance within their political dialogue in 2004. That is, are the same societal issues being framed as problems with which the candidates and the public must contend; or instead, do the candidates and the media offer different issues different levels of importance?

"Journalists' reliance on elite sources for material means that even if they dispute the source's assumptions or conclusions, they still construct the story in terms established by that source," (Nelson, Clawson, Oxley 1996). Kaniss (1991) reaches a similar conclusion that local media (specifically analyzing local media in major metropolitan centers) is often short on information because journalists lack the time and technical expertise to provide a critical perspective on all issues and local happenings. Since it is arguable that rural newspapers have

fewer resources than their larger, urban counterparts and because studies have found that media coverage shows distinct differences across rural and urban media lines in that rural media are less likely to mimic the coverage of national or daily media because they serve a particular role for their area, I hypothesize (Yopp & McAdams 2003):

H2a: Because of the media's reliance on elite sources, coverage of political issues will increase in the days after a candidate's visit for both rural and urban newspapers.

I argue that the issue framing within the print media will also be influenced by partisanship. Based on research of past voting trends, this study seeks to evaluate the extent to which newspapers in traditionally Republican or Democratic regions match their coverage of key political issues to the perceived strengths of their party's candidate. Put simply, do newspapers in traditionally Republican areas focus more on foreign policy issues since that is President Bush's perceived strength?

Research has shown that traditionally Republican and Democratic areas are generally divided into rural and urban areas. Knoke and Henry (1977) found that rural and small town America continues to vote for and publicly support the Republican Party while urban areas have generally been Democratic, and the study offers no evidence that these relationships will erode (p. 54). The 2004 election appears to adhere to these findings with the Republican Party winning in almost all rural areas and the Democratic Party winning in more urban areas of Ohio (Hamilton 2006).

These partisan voting trends are important within the context of information processing. Research in this area suggests a confirmatory bias that causes people to be more willing to accept news that supports their existing stereotypes which easily fit into the partisan classifications that people possess (Rahn, 1993; Nisbett and Ross, 1980; Pratto and John, 1991). Based on this

research and knowledge of partisan voting trends, this researcher hypothesizes that rural newspapers will focus on President Bush's perceived strengths in an attempt to direct political discourse in his favor while urban newspapers will do the same for their candidate, Senator Kerry, because of the partisan bias of their readers. News coverage will align itself with the partisan trends of its readership because people are more willing to accept, and thus continue to purchase, news that supports their confirmatory bias.

H2b: Rural print media, in its attempt to align itself with President Bush, will focus predominately on foreign issues, the president's perceived strengths, while urban print media will focus on domestic issues in an attempt to more closely align itself with Senator Kerry.

While it is expected that the urban media and Senator Kerry will frame their political dialogue domestically, we must take this hypothesis further into a discussion of Ohio's role within this domestic discourse. While there is much research on resource allocation regarding television advertising, campaign trips, state-level funds, and state-level campaign personnel, unfortunately this research does not expand into a discussion of the money, personnel, and time speech writing requires (Gurian 1986; Bartels 1985; Brams and Davis 1974; Colantoni et al. 1975). Without inside knowledge of presidential campaigns, it is impossible to know to what degree campaign resources are allocated to public speeches. But, it seems plausible that a candidate, with millions of dollars to spend and state-specific employees especially centered in battleground states, could change his speeches to focus on the state in which he is currently campaigning. This could be an entirely new speech or, more likely, a speech which is easily edited to include state-specific problems and proposals to change these. However, it is arguably unlikely a candidate would make a great effort to appear state focused for fear that the national news media would cover his campaign as such. Thus, this study analyzes the extent to which the

candidates as well as the media, when framing the election domestically, focus their political dialogue specifically on Ohio.

H3: While the print media will frame the political discourse around Ohio when discussing domestic issues, neither candidate will follow suit; instead, the candidates will use Ohio as a backdrop against which to further their national agendas rather than focusing on state-specific issues.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter discusses the technical details of the study, including the manner in which the cases were chosen, how news stories were selected, the parameters of the content analyses, and the manner in which the hypotheses were tested.

Sampling media content

A content analysis of Ohio-based newspapers and presidential campaign speeches in Ohio was conducted for this study. The newspaper data used was acquired through the electronic databases, Lexis Nexis[®], News Bank[®], as well as the online archives of specific newspapers which were not available through these databases. Articles from newspapers in the cities or neighboring towns in an area a presidential candidate visited between September 1, 2004, and October 31, 2004, were collected from the areas of Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Dayton, Ironton, Yellow Springs, and Massillon, Ohio. This timeframe was chosen because September 1, 2004, was after both conventions and October 31, 2004, directly preceded Election Day.

These areas are divided into rural and urban areas using the definition provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is important to note the urban and rural areas could have been defined using different criteria, but for the purpose of this study an urban area is defined as a city with a population greater than 50,000 (HHS Appendix 21). Rural areas are defined by exclusion – areas which are not urban are defined as rural. These numbers do not differentiate between urban areas and urban clusters, but rely on the city or town's population as identified by the 2000 Census.

Written transcripts of the major-party candidates' campaign speeches which met the time and place requirements were collected from the online pressrooms found at The White House

website (www.whitehouse.gov) and Senator Kerry's campaign website (www.johnkerry.com), respectively.

Content Analysis

Traditional computer-based analysis was judged to be insufficient for this study because of the focus on the semantical and situational features within the framing of political issues. Instead, human coding was conducted to ensure that issues were accurately categorized. These categories were domestic, foreign, horserace, and both.

The rules for human coding were as follows:

- An issue is defined as *Domestic* if it directly occurs on U.S. soil or with U.S. citizens.
- An issue is defined as *Foreign* if it does not occur directly on U.S. soil or with U.S. citizens.
- An issue is defined as *Both* if it occurs directly on U.S. soil or with U.S. citizens at the same time that it directly occurs on non-U.S. soil or with non-U.S. citizens.
- An issue is defined as *Horserace* if it is discussing the candidates' issue stances or campaign strategies.
- A speech is defined as *Ohio focused* only when the candidate himself explains Ohio issues and offers Ohio-specific solutions.
- An article is defined as *Ohio focused* only when Ohio-specific issues, statistics, and/or solutions comprise at least 51% of the article's political discussion.

After the completion of all human coding, the data was analyzed in SPSS 16.0 for Windows® to test hypothesis H2a. In order to test this hypothesis, graphs were created which illustrated the number of political articles the newspaper published within a given publication cycle (i.e. daily or weekly). To control for the differences in size of each newspaper across areas and throughout the week, raw numbers were converted to percentages to analyze the amount of each publication dedicated to political coverage. To evaluate H1, H2b, and H3 frequency tables were created which compared the percent of issues which fell into each category. The content of

these tables follow the same rules as the aforementioned human coding. To expand on these rules, however, *predominately* is defined as accounting for at least 51% of the content of either the speech or the overall coverage in the newspaper, meaning the days after a candidate's visit.

To evaluate the differences, the contents of all the newspapers and speeches examined are not only broken into broad categories, as discussed, but each issue is also coded following the aforementioned human coding rules. Isolating the individual issues discussed is important to evaluate the differences between the sources. Put simply, the existence of a relationship between a candidate's speech and the local print media with respect to predominate focus is not extensive enough to fully evaluate a relationship between the two. Instead, beyond a similar broad issue focus, each source's specific issue discourse is analyzed to evaluate the extent to which each of the sources are discussing the same specific issues.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

Here, it is important to clarify a few questions that may arise throughout these case studies. When analyzing the specific issues discussed in the print media, the focus of this study is on the days after a candidate's visit to the area. This is important because, logically, the candidates could only influence media coverage in the days following their speech in the area. Thus, throughout this chapter, the figures illustrating the most-discussed political issues in the print media are for the four days during and after a candidate's visit. However, it is important to note that in regard to Ohio's role within the political discourse, specific articles printed in the three days before a candidate's visit are occasionally quoted. This is because, logically, the content of the newspapers could not influence a candidate's speech after the speech was made.

The Candidates in Urban Ohio

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the candidates' visits to urban centers throughout Ohio, evaluating the extent to which the candidates and the political news coverage in the urban print media are interrelated with respect to the aforementioned hypotheses. We will examine media and candidate appearances in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Dayton. The candidate-media relationship will be examined through a series of cases.

Case 1: Senator Kerry in Cincinnati

In the 1996 presidential election, Republican Candidate Bob Dole defeated Democratic candidate Bill Clinton in Hamilton County, Ohio, by a seven percentage point margin. This trend continued in 2000, when Republican candidate George W. Bush defeated Democratic candidate Al Gore by a 13% margin in the county (CNN). In a county with a trend of voting for the Republican candidate, how would the *Cincinnati Enquirer* be influenced by Democratic

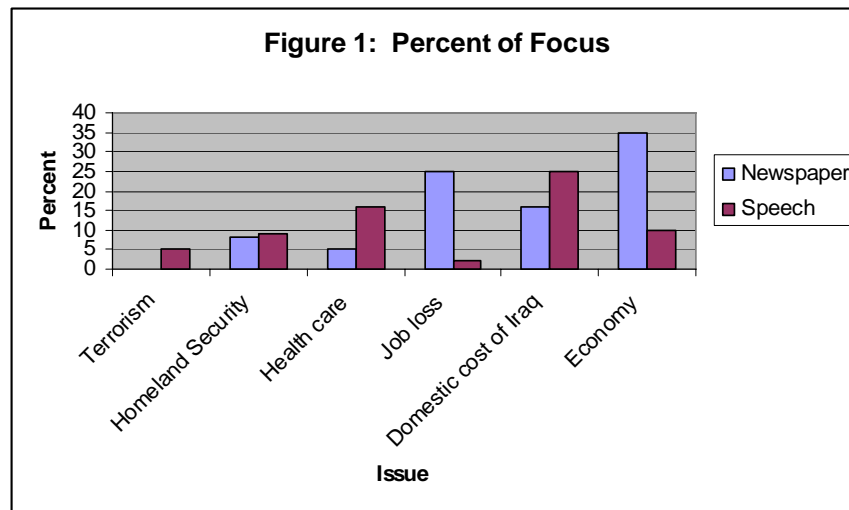
Senator John Kerry's visit to the city?

Senator Kerry visited the area on September 8, 2004, giving a speech at the Union Terminal in Cincinnati which focused predominately on domestic issues, as expected. Although the issue focus is not identical for both the senator's speech and the political news coverage in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the breakdown of foreign and domestic issues is quite similar as Table 1 shows. This suggests that even though Hamilton County votes predominately Republican, the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* coverage supports the hypothesis that urban newspapers focused on domestic issues which are Senator Kerry's perceived strengths. While this initial analysis might suggest a significant relationship between the sources, further evaluation does not support this conclusion, especially in regard to the specific issues discussed.

In the days after Senator Kerry's visit, 23 political articles were identified, and the issues covered by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in these articles were compared to those covered by Senator Kerry in his Union Terminal speech. While the Pew Research Center survey, "Public Opinion: Little Changed by Presidential Election," found that the top issues nearest September were rising gas prices and the situation in Iraq, coverage in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* was predominately based on the U.S. economy. Interestingly, this does not mirror Senator Kerry's speech because his speech mirrored the Pew Center's findings regarding the top newsworthy issues and focused predominately on the situation in Iraq.

The *Enquirer's* second most predominant issue, with 25% of all identified articles in the newspaper, was job loss, but this issue comprised less than 3% of Senator Kerry's speech. The third most popular issue in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* was the domestic cost of Iraq, which received over 15% of the identified coverage. Senator Kerry, however, made the domestic cost of Iraq his main issue in his speech at Union Terminal which was aptly titled "Remarks on Bush's Wrong

Choices in Iraq that have Left Us without the Resources We Need at Home.” Figure 1 illustrates the top issues both Senator Kerry and the newspaper covered.



* The *Enquirer* offered terrorism zero percent of its issue coverage

While it is clear that similar issues were discussed in both Senator Kerry’s speech and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, it is also clear that while the top three issues are similar for both outlets, their level of importance is not. That is, Senator Kerry’s top three most discussed issues were:

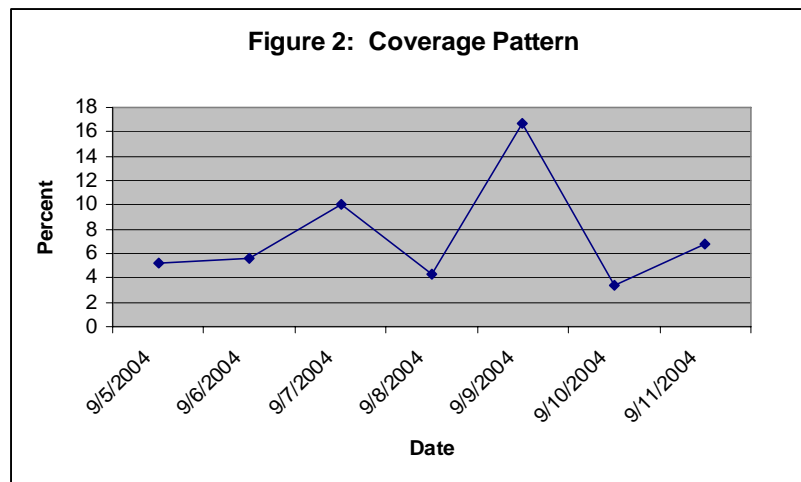
1. Domestic cost of Iraq (24.7%)
2. Health care (15.6%)
3. U.S. economy (10.4%)

While the *Cincinnati Enquirer*’s top three covered issues were:

1. U.S. economy (34.4%)
2. Job loss (25%)
3. Domestic cost of Iraq (15.6%)

Figure 2 illustrates the pattern of political news coverage in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in regard to the three days before and after Senator Kerry’s visit with the middle date, September 8, being the day of his speech. Political news coverage experienced a 233% increase on September 9, which was a Thursday; so, it is plausible that such a sharp increase was connected to Senator

Kerry's visit because Thursday is, arguably, not a day of the week characterized by a tremendous increase in news coverage as Sunday is. To further the argument that this increase and the senator's visit are connected, much of this increase was due to articles covering the senator's rally rather than greater political issues which do not focus on any one candidate per se.



However, no argument can be made in support of a relationship between Senator Kerry and the *Enquirer* with respect to Ohio's role within the political discourse. At no time in his speech did Senator Kerry discuss issues as they directly related to Ohio but instead used Ohio as merely a backdrop for political discussion, as expected. For instance, never in his speech did he mention how many jobs had been lost in Ohio or how many Ohioans were currently unemployed. Instead, he focused his statistics nationally – “While we’re spending that \$200 billion in Iraq, 8 million Americans are looking for work...” (Senator Kerry, 2004, p. 2). However, newspaper coverage in Cincinnati during this week was particularly focused on Ohio. For example, on the same issue of job loss,

"For manufacturing the downturn started sooner," George Vredeveld, director of the Economics Center for Education and Research at the University of Cincinnati said. "In fact, the region has lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs since May 2000" (Eckberg 2004).

In fact, 71.9% of the identified articles took national issues and applied them directly to Ohio while zero percent of Senator Kerry's speech did the same. Thus, while on the surface the issues mentioned in each source seem similar in regard to focus, closer analysis of the texts illustrates the great extent to which the news coverage and Senator Kerry's speech differ.

Overall, this case supports the hypotheses. For instance, coverage of political issues did increase dramatically in the day following Senator Kerry's speech in the area. Also, Senator Kerry's statements focused almost solely on domestic issues which were his perceived strength as articulated by the Pew Research Center poll; but, although Senator Kerry's speech was domestically centered, never in this speech was Ohio or Ohio statistics mentioned to bolster his arguments. Instead, he used only national statistics as blanket statements, even though the newspaper coverage near the time of his visit took such data and applied it directly to Ohio.

In regard to the news coverage, the *Enquirer* did, as expected, focus its coverage on domestic issues, which were not only Senator Kerry's perceived strength but also the focus of his speech. However, since neither medium focused their importance on the same domestic issues and since the senator gave no mention to Ohio while the newspaper coverage was almost exclusively concerned with how national issues were affecting Ohio, it is arguable that a minimal relationship exists with respect to specific issues and Ohio's role within these issues.

In sum, this case study illustrates the extent to which the modes of delivery do not interrelate. Senator Kerry gave his speech on the issues he felt would draw attention to his perceived strengths. Yet, he was not concerned with elevating Ohio's

role within his discussion, as the *Cincinnati Enquirer* was. So, while the modes of delivery occasionally crossed paths on an issue's importance, there is minimal evidence to support an in-depth relationship.

Case 2: President Bush in Columbus

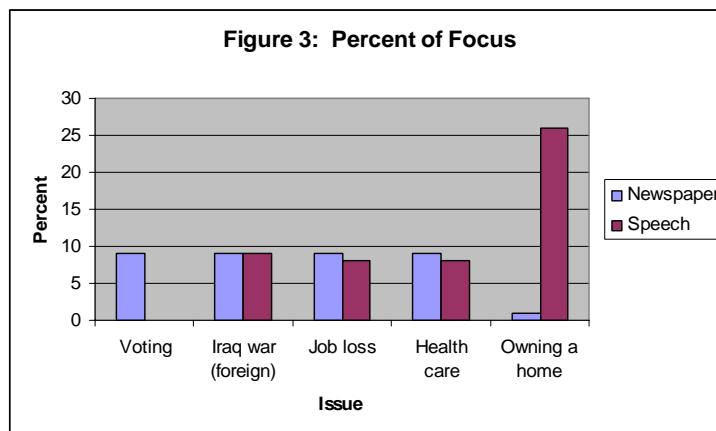
Throughout the previous three presidential elections, Franklin County voters have remained relatively moderate. That is, in none of the previous three elections has either political party's candidate won by more than 4% in the county. In 1992 George Bush won by just 2%; while in 1996 and 2000, Democratic candidates Bill Clinton and Al Gore won by less than 4% and 1% respectively (CNN). With no clear partisan voting trend in the county, how would the *Columbus Dispatch* be influenced by President Bush's visit?

President Bush gave a speech in Columbus on October 2, 2004, which, surprisingly, focused predominately on domestic issues as Table 1 illustrates. This is contrary to the hypothesis that the president would focus predominately on foreign issues in his public addresses because such issues were his perceived public strengths, according to the Pew Research Center's findings.

As expected, even though Franklin County is neither regularly Republican nor Democratic, the *Dispatch's* political coverage supports the hypothesis that urban newspapers would focus predominately on domestic issues, which are Senator Kerry's perceived strengths. However, the newspaper was less exclusively domestically-focused than the president's speech. As Table 1 illustrates, there is a 17% differential in the amount of domestic exclusivity between the *Dispatch* and the president's speech focus.

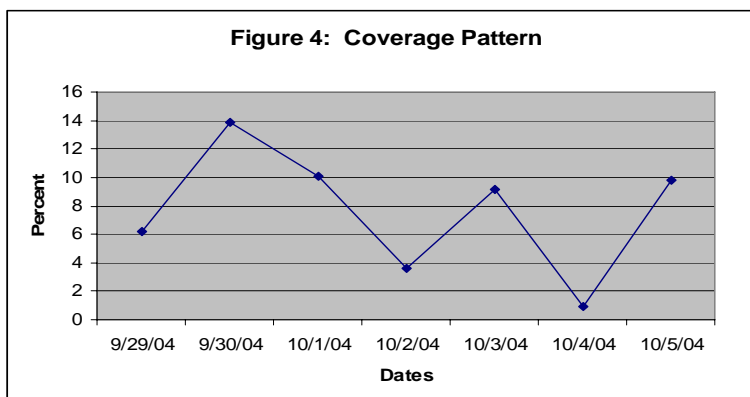
Also interesting was the manner in which domestic issues were covered in the *Dispatch*. Unlike the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, for instance, which had three distinct top issues, the *Dispatch* seems more concerned with breadth than depth in regard to its political issue coverage. That is, no one issue accounted for more than 12.4% of the newspaper's political coverage, and the issue that accounted for this percent was not an actual political issue but rather political horserace coverage. Of the actual political issues, no one issue accounted for more than 9.2% of the political coverage. But, while no one issue dominated the news coverage, forty-one issues were discussed in the *Dispatch* throughout the week, with 20 of these accounting for less than 1% of all the political issue coverage.

Such issue variance was also present in President Bush's Columbus address in which he discussed 37 separate issues. The difference, though, is that the president's speech did have a focus. The issue of home ownership accounted for 25% of all issues President Bush discussed in his speech while this issue accounted for less than 1% of the newspaper's coverage. Figure 3 illustrates that while some issues accounted for the same percent of coverage in both media, none of these issues received more than 10% of the coverage in both the *Dispatch* and the speech. Thus, as the figure demonstrates, neither the *Dispatch* nor the president's speech were framing the election around the same top issue.



* President Bush offered zero percent of his speech to voting.

It is also important to note how coverage of political issues as a whole was influenced by President Bush's visit. Unexpectedly, political news coverage the day of the president's visit accounted for the second least amount of the entire newspaper for the week. Although the following day did experience an increase in the amount of the newspaper dedicated to political coverage, this total was less than the day before the visit. Thus, political news coverage in the *Dispatch* does not support the hypothesis that political news coverage would increase after a candidate's visit. Figure 4 illustrates the pattern of political news coverage in the *Dispatch* for the three days before and after President Bush's visit with the middle date, October 2, being the day of his speech.



In regard to Ohio's role within the political dialogue, the hypothesis is supported, but it must be noted that the president did make two specific mentions of Ohio. President Bush makes a direct reference to Karen Kindron, a volunteer for Rebuilding Together of Columbus, when speaking about the importance of owning a home.

“[Karen] represents the true strength of America...the program for which she volunteers helps low-income, elderly, and disabled homeowners. Since founded in 1988, over 2 million volunteers [with the organization] have rehabilitated 87,000 homes” (President Bush, 2004, p.1).

The president also makes direct reference to flood damage throughout Ohio when he discusses federal aid.

“And so many communities here in Ohio have suffered severe flooding caused by the hurricanes. We've issued disaster declarations for 20 counties in Ohio, making residents whose homes have been damaged or destroyed eligible for assistance” (President Bush, 2004, p.1).

However, these are the only two references to Ohio-specific statistics, neither of which actually delves deeply into issues affecting Ohio. Also, at no point when discussing other issues did the president mention the extent to which Ohio is affected by them. While the speech does not completely ignore happenings in Ohio, it is far from focused on Ohio. Instead, the president uses the state as a backdrop to discuss national issues, as expected.

At the same time, the *Dispatch* was exactly the opposite in regard to its focus on Ohio. The newspaper focused almost exclusively not only on Ohio issues, but specifically Columbus issues. At no point in his speech did President Bush use such statistics or mirror such focus. For instance, when arguing that the economy had become stronger and jobs more plentiful, President Bush could have discussed PharmaForce's plan to bring 75 jobs to the Columbus area which the *Dispatch* reported on September 29, 2004.

“A Columbus company that has carved a niche in the pharmaceutical industry is moving ahead with two expansion projects that are expected to create as many as 75 jobs. There is an empty warehouse there now,” said Michael Medors, PharmaForce partner and chief financial officer. “Our plan is to renovate it and build it into a sterile manufacturing facility. There is a whole gamut of products we can manufacture there” (Matthews 2004).

Such Ohio-specific articles accounted for 68.2% of the identified articles in the *Dispatch*.

Overall, President Bush's experience in Columbus is not entirely consistent with the hypotheses. That is, the president unexpectedly focused almost solely on domestic issues, yet he gave Ohio no such exclusivity, which was expected. Instead, again the candidate used the state as a backdrop against which to further his national agenda rather than allowing Ohio to become the center of the political dialogue which is in direct contrast to the area's political news

coverage.

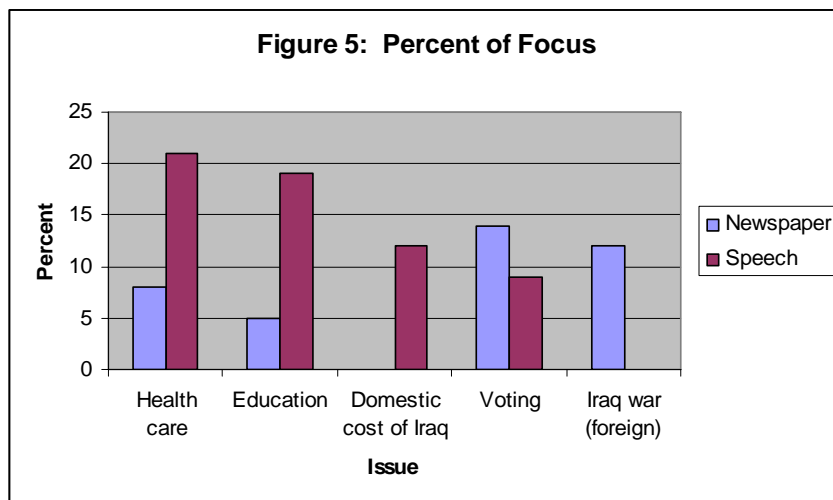
While the *Dispatch* did not mirror the president in regard to Ohio's importance, coverage did mirror President Bush's speech on a few issues; however, these issues received less than 10% of the focus within either medium. In regard to the issues framed as most important, the two were again not interrelated. That is, the issue of home ownership, framed as most important by President Bush, received relatively no attention from the *Columbus Dispatch*. Again, it is apparent that minimal interrelation exists between the print media and the president's speech.

Case 3: Senator Kerry in Cleveland

Senator Kerry stopped in the distinctly democratic city of Cleveland, Ohio, giving a speech at the East Mt. Zion Baptist Church on October 3, 2004. To put this visit into context, the East Mt. Zion Baptist Church has a predominately African American congregation and is located on Euclid Avenue. Euclid Avenue, once home to a multitude of palatial mansions, is now dotted with commercial buildings and low-income housing, becoming the focus of many refurbishment projects to date. Such surroundings help understand the senator's almost exclusive domestic focus. However, while the senator's speech met expectations, local news coverage in the *Plain Dealer* did not entirely meet such expectations.

An initial analysis of the political coverage in the *Plain Dealer* in the days after the senator's visit appears to yield evidence supporting the hypothesis that the *Plain Dealer* would focus mainly on domestic issues. And, even though domestic issues accounted for 74.2% of the issues discussed in the *Plain Dealer*, as Table 1 illustrates, the second most discussed issue was foreign – the Iraq war. To clarify, the newspaper was not framing the war as a domestic issue as Senator Kerry did in his Cleveland and Cincinnati speeches, instead the newspaper reported on

the war within the context of a foreign issue. This is important to note because such a high level of importance was not given to any foreign issue in the previous urban newspapers. Figure 5 illustrates the top three issues in both Senator Kerry's speech and the *Plain Dealer*.¹

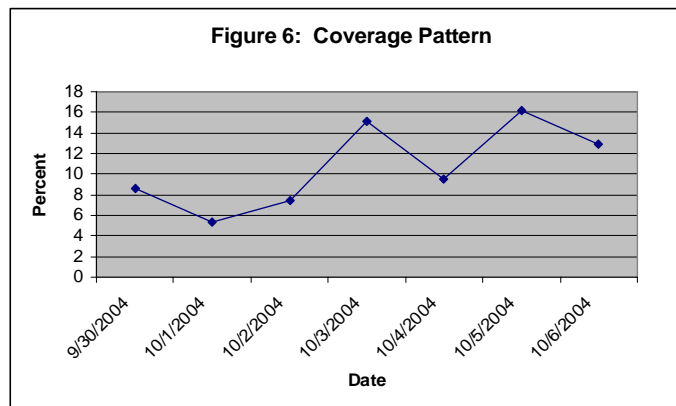


* The *Plain Dealer* offered zero percent of its coverage to the domestic cost of Iraq.

As Figure 5 illustrates, several of the same issues were discussed in both the *Plain Dealer* and Senator Kerry's speech. However, while similar issues were discussed, none of the issues were offered similar framing importance. Thus, it appears that the *Plain Dealer* remained unaffected by the senator's framing of the issues.

While the relationship between Senator Kerry and the *Plain Dealer* in regard to the framing of the issues is limited, the relationship between the two in regard to the amount of political news coverage is not. Figure 6 illustrates the pattern of political news coverage in the days surrounding Senator Kerry's speech.

¹ Health care was a top issue for both media, thus only five issues are graphed.



Interestingly, unlike the previous newspapers, the political coverage increase did not occur in the days following Senator Kerry's speech but rather the day of his speech, which is consistent with the idea that political news coverage peaks around the time of a candidate's visit. However, it is important to note that October 3 was a Sunday, thus it is possible, that such a sharp increase was due not to the senator's visit but instead due to the day of the week. This argument is furthered when the content of the articles on this date are examined. That is, news coverage of Senator Kerry's visit did not dominate the headlines on October 3, thus it is arguable that this sharp increase and the senator's visit are mere coincidences. However, it is possible that though the senator's visit did not inspire a great amount of news coverage, it could have influenced politics' place within the news. This is arguable because the Sunday paper is typically the largest but that does not mean that political coverage is automatically larger on Sunday as well. Thus, some other variables could be at play, such as Senator Kerry's visit.

There is no argument needed in regard to Senator Kerry's speech and the news coverage at this time with respect to Ohio's importance within the political discourse. Instead, it is clear that while the local media, again, vaulted Ohio to supreme importance, the candidate did not.

In his Cleveland address, Senator Kerry mentioned how many jobs had been specifically lost in Ohio, "...we're paying the price: 1.6 million lost jobs – 237,000 right here in Ohio..."

(Senator Kerry, p.2). However, this was the only mention of Ohio-specific issues within the senator's speech which supports the initial hypothesis that the candidates would not use Ohio as the focus of their Ohio campaign speeches. As with the previous urban newspapers, the *Plain Dealer* did not mirror the senator's disregard for an Ohio-specific focus. Instead, 59% of the newspaper's non-horserace articles took national issues and applied them directly to the state or local level.

Overall, Senator Kerry's visit to Cleveland does not support all of the initial hypotheses. While both the *Plain Dealer* and the senator focused predominately on domestic issues and often the same issues, the newspaper did not mirror the senator with respect to framing importance except voting, which still only accounted for less than 10% of the senator's speech. Also, it is important to note that the senator and the newspaper did not give the same level of importance to Ohio's role within the political discourse. Thus, as with the previous case studies neither the newspaper nor the candidate framed the election in the same political issue terms.

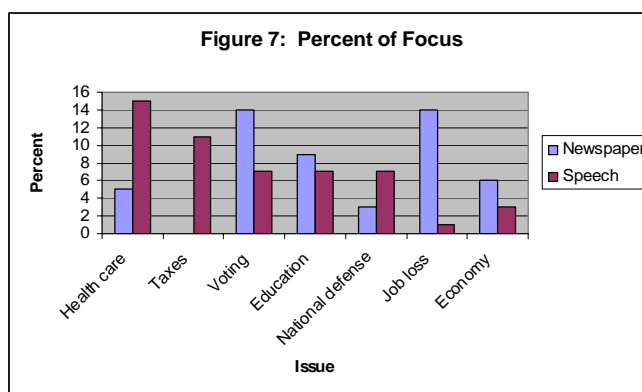
With regard to the amount of political news coverage, Senator Kerry's visit to the area coincided with an extreme increase in the amount of political news coverage; however, this may be nothing more than a coincidence given that the Sunday newspaper is typically the largest of the week allowing for more political news coverage. Thus, I cannot be confident that this sharp increase is related to the senator's visit; however, I argue it remains very possible. Overall, there is minimal concrete evidence in support of a relationship between Senator Kerry and the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* beyond a predominate domestic focus.

Case 4: President Bush in Dayton

President Bush's visit to Dayton on October 28, 2004, proved relatively similar to the previous studies in regard to the president's domestic base and the lack of interrelationship

between the area's political content and the candidate's public address even though the president had carried the county in the 2000 presidential election.

Figure 7 illustrates the top four issues from both the *Dayton Daily News* and the president's Dayton address.² While voting was a top issue for both modes of delivery, it is arguable that this is because of the proximity to Election Day rather than because of a relationship between the newspaper and the president's speech. Aside from the issues of voting and education, none of the top issues received the same level of importance across both media, as the figure illustrates.

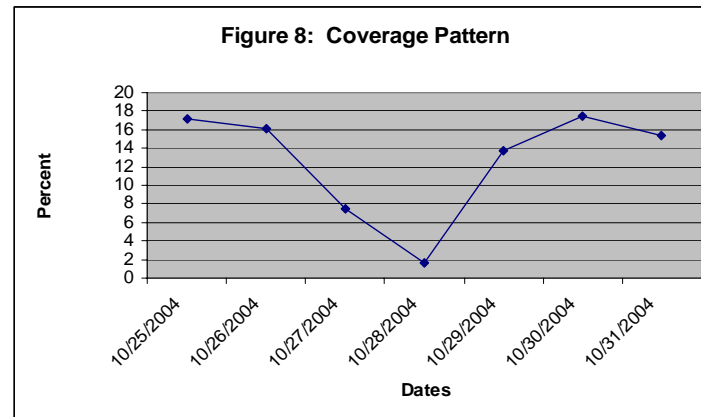


*The *Daily News* offered zero percent of its coverage to taxes.

While there is minimal evidence in support of an interrelationship between the *Dayton Daily News* and President Bush's speech in regard to the importance given to specific issues, there is also no positive relationship between the candidate's visit and the volume of political news coverage. That is, on the day of the president's visit, the *Dayton Daily News* offered less than 2% of its newspaper to political news; and, although coverage the next day did increase dramatically, it was not greater than the two days before the visit. Figure 8 illustrates the pattern

² The top four issues were used rather than the top three issues because both the president and the *Dayton Daily News* had issues which were tied for the top three most discussed, thus making it impossible to deduce which three were of the most importance. Only seven issues are shown because the issues of voting and education were in the top four issues for both sources.

of political news coverage in the *Dayton Daily News* in the days surrounding President Bush's visit to the area.



While there is no evidence to support the hypothesis regarding an increase in political news coverage, a content analysis of the political dialogue in both modes of delivery was relatively consistent with the hypothesis regarding Ohio's role within the political discourse. That is, President Bush mentioned only two Ohio-specific statistics in his Dayton address.

“I understand times are tough here in Ohio...The unemployment rate went from 6.3 percent to 6 percent last month. Ohio added 5,500 new jobs last month” (President Bush, 2004, p.2).

This minimal focus on Ohio is somewhat contrastable to the news coverage in the *Dayton Daily News*. More than 25% of the non-horserace news articles in the *Dayton Daily News* in the days surrounding President Bush's visit were focused solely on Ohio and Dayton-area issues. For instance, the article titled “Troy plant facing layoffs – Picture-tube maker provides 1,150 jobs,” uses regional statistics to augment the argument that more jobs are being lost than created. However, it is important to note that the amount of Ohio-specific news coverage is significantly less than in the previous studies. Thus, while there is no clear relationship between the two sources in regard to Ohio's role within the political dialogue, the *Dayton Daily News* mirrored the president's disregard for Ohio more so than the previous urban newspapers.

Overall, while the focus breakdown is similar for the *Dayton Daily News* and President Bush's speech, that is the extent of the relationship. Again, neither framed the same political issues with the same level of importance, except for the issues of education and voting. Yet, education only accounted for less than 10% of the political coverage in either source, and while voting was of greater importance, this may be attributable to an extraneous factor. Beyond that, the amount of political news coverage was also not positively related to President Bush's visit. However, the analysis does suggest a similar disregard for Ohio-specific political discussion, which was unexpected in regard to the *Dayton Daily News*. And, while this is not meant to immediately suggest a relationship between the sources, it is an interesting parallel not found in the previous cases.

The Candidates in Rural Ohio

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the candidates' visits to rural areas throughout Ohio evaluating the extent to which the candidates and the political news coverage in the rural print media are interrelated in respect to the hypotheses. It must be noted that in only one of the following studies did the candidate speak directly in the town discussed. In the other studies the candidate spoke in a larger, neighboring area in close proximity to the rural newspaper which was content analyzed making it arguable that the newspaper could easily cover and thus be influenced by the campaign event.

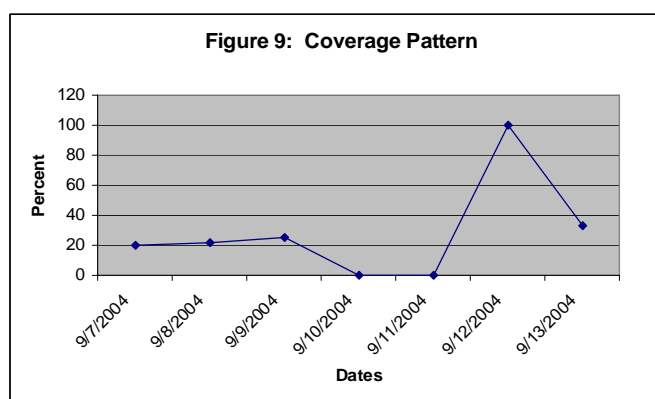
Case 5: President Bush in Ironton

The only rural Ohio community either of the candidates directly spoke in was Ironton, the county seat of Lawrence County, a town in southern Appalachian Ohio near the Ohio River where President Bush spoke on September 10, 2004. Although Lawrence County is defined as

rural and the president had won the county by 5% in the 2000 election, the *Ironton Tribune's* political coverage was unexpectedly unrelated to the president's address.

As Table 1 illustrates, the political focus of the *Ironton Tribune* was surprisingly not only domestically focused but also equally concerned with horserace coverage. In fact, the *Tribune* had the most horserace focus when compared to the other print news outlets. While such horserace coverage was not seen in the president's speech, the domestic focus is again unexpectedly similar.

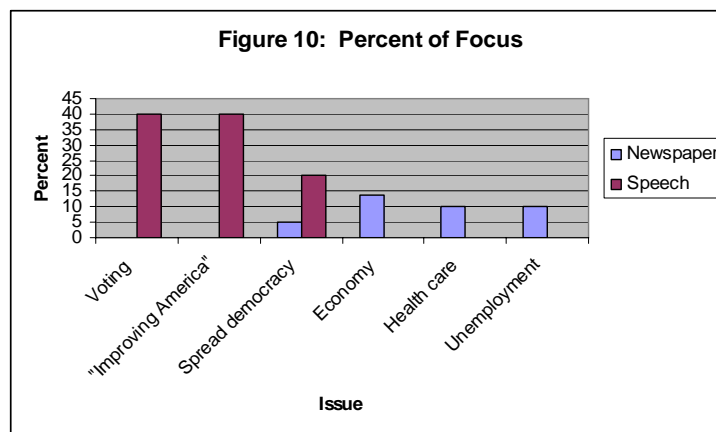
The type of political coverage was not the only unexpected aspect of President Bush's visit to Ironton. First, as Figure 9 illustrates, President Bush's visit unexpectedly had no positive impact on the amount of political news coverage. In fact, in the two days following the president's milestone visit, no articles were published in the *Tribune*.³ To clarify, the newspaper is a fairly regular daily paper. Thus, the reason for this lull in publication is unknown, but clearly President Bush's visit did not create news on the day of or the day after his visit. It must also be noted that the extreme political news increase on September 12 is not attributed to the president's visit because none of the coverage was related to his area speech.



While there is no evidence to support a positive relationship between the president's visit and the amount of political news coverage in the area, there also exists no evidence in support of

³ No presidential candidate had previously visited Ironton, Ohio.

a relationship between the two in regard to political discourse. Figure 10 illustrates the issues covered in both media. While it is quickly apparent that neither medium was discussing the same issues, it is arguable that “improving America,” as President Bush said, could include health care, the economy, and unemployment. However, at no point in his speech does President Bush use concrete language to explain this statement. Instead, the president used the blanket statement, “[we are] united to making this country a better place for everybody,” rather than mentioning specific issues crucial to accomplishing this feat (President Bush, 2004, p.1). Without knowing what specific issues the president was describing with this statement, it is impossible to categorize it with the issues covered in the *Tribune*. Thus, as Figure 10 illustrates, beyond focusing on domestic issues neither the *Tribune* nor President Bush focused on the same specific issues.



* The only issue in both sources was the spread of democracy.

This lack of interrelationship between the two is also supported by both sources' divergence in relation to Ohio. That is, while 75% of the political articles in the *Ironton Tribune* focused specifically on Ironton, at no time did the president mention issues relating specifically to Ironton or Ohio as a whole. In fact, as discussed, his speech focused on relatively few issues but more blanket statements regarding national improvements. Interestingly, such a speech was not given in the urban areas analyzed. That is, although both candidates rarely discussed Ohio

specifically when speaking in urban areas, both did at least discuss specific issues. Neither candidate based a large aspect of their urban-area speeches on non-specific blanket statements as President Bush did in Ironton. While the reason for this is unknown within the scope of this research, this difference is interesting and could lead to further research on the topic.

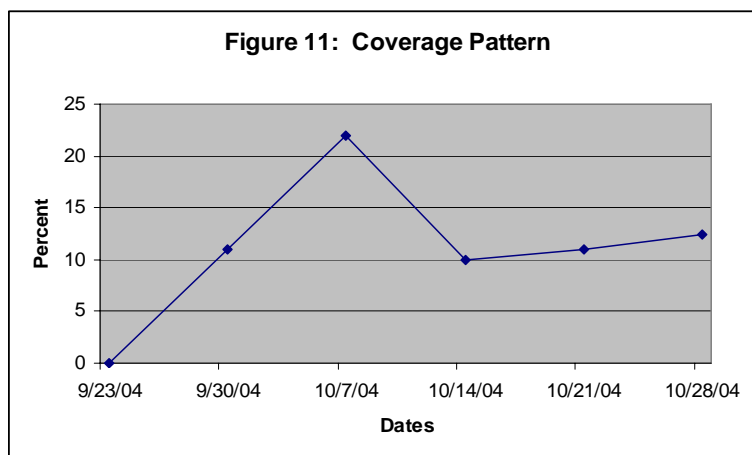
Although this study hypothesized that differences would be apparent between rural and urban news coverage, the *Ironton Tribune* offers no evidence in support of this. Instead, the *Tribune* was relatively similar to urban news coverage in that the newspaper's main focus was not on foreign issues, as expected, but rather domestic issues. However, it is important to note that while the domestic focus was unexpected, the *Tribune* was not solely domestically focused, but had a split focus between domestic issues and horserace coverage. Such a focus on horserace coverage was not only unexpected but also unseen in the previous urban cases.

Also contrary to the hypotheses was the lack of increase in political news coverage in the *Tribune* in the days following President Bush's visit as well the lack of support for a relationship between the two with respect to the specific issues discussed. This lack of relationship with the president on the part of the *Tribune* was unexpected since rural newspapers have fewer resources it is arguable that these news outlets would be more prone to not only cover but actually reiterate the candidate's speech during his visit to the area. Instead, the opposite was found to be the case. The *Tribune* did not attempt to more closely align itself with the president's speech. Also unexpected was the president's reliance on blanket statements about national improvement in his address. In all, as seen with the urban studies, minimal support exists in regard to a relationship between the *Ironton Tribune* and President Bush's Ironton address.

Case 6: Senator Kerry in Greene County

October 3, 2004, Senator Kerry stopped in traditionally-Republican Greene County to speak in Xenia, Ohio. Although Senator Kerry did not speak directly in Yellow Springs, the village is less than 10 miles from Xenia, making it probable that the *Yellow Springs News* could cover the senator's visit to the area. Understanding the extent to which a relationship existed between the *Yellow Springs News* and the senator's visit is interesting since in at least the previous five presidential elections, the Republican candidate has carried the county by as much as 34% (CNN).

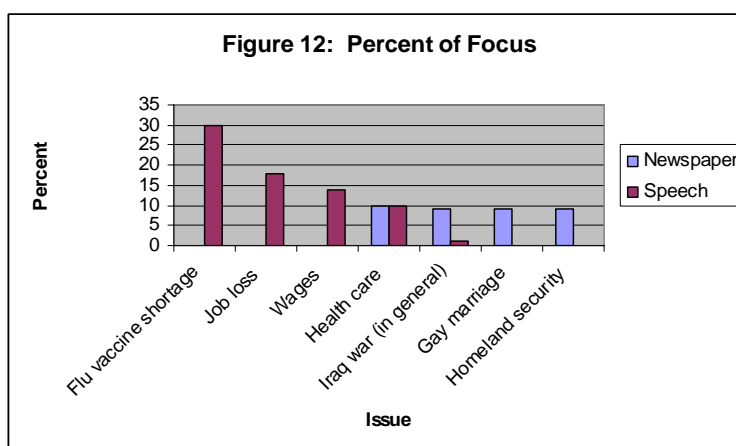
The *Yellow Springs News* is a weekly publication. The week of October 7 is considered that date of the senator's address in Figure 11 which illustrates the coverage pattern for political news in the three weeks before and after Senator Kerry's visit. Although the region is predominately Republican, the week of the senator's visit experienced a more-than 100% increase in political news coverage in the *Yellow Springs News*.



However, this increase cannot be unequivocally attributed to the candidate because none of the political articles directly covered the senator's visit. Yet, it is possible this increase is attributable to the senator since such an increase was not experienced in the other weeks.

Analysis of the political coverage in the *Yellow Springs News* offered scant support for the expected results. That is, the coverage was not predominately foreign, as expected, but rather more closely aligned itself with Senator Kerry's domestic focus. Table 1 illustrates this predominate domestic focus. It is interesting to note that the *Yellow Springs News*, while remaining domestically focused, reported more foreign political issues in comparison with its rural counterparts while Senator Kerry's speech remained almost exclusively domestic. This also parallels the fact that no other rural community had such an extreme history of Republican support in the presidential elections. While this study does not delve into this parallel, its existence is apparent.

Moving beyond a similar political focus, the issues discussed by Senator Kerry were relatively dissimilar from those issues covered by the *Yellow Springs News* except in regard to health care. Figure 12 illustrates the top four issues.⁴



* The only issues both sources discussed were health care and generalities about the Iraq war.

Not only did the issue of health care appear in one of the top four issue positions for both sources, but it also received almost an identical amount of attention which was not seen consistently in the other rural studies.

⁴ Since the issue of health care was one of the top four issues for both medias, only seven issues are graphed.

This similar focus on health care could be an argument for an interrelationship between the *Yellow Springs News* and Senator Kerry's speech. However, with only one issue receiving similar framing in regard to importance, it is plausible that no interrelation exists and this is merely a coincidence.

In regard to Ohio's place as the center of political discourse, the findings were consistent with the previous analyses. That is, 50% of the issues in the *Yellow Springs News* focused specifically on the village while Senator Kerry gave a relatively minimal discussion of Ohio in his Xenia address.

However, it is important to note that the Senator did make three specific mentions to Ohio in his speech, which is more than in any of his previous addresses. The senator again mentioned how many jobs have been lost specifically in Ohio, but he also quoted Treasury Secretary John Snow's visit to Ohio and coverage of this in the local media.

"Just this week, President Bush's Treasury Secretary, John Snow, came right here to Ohio – a state with some of the worst job losses in America – and stated that job losses are nothing but a 'myth.' It's right here, on the front page of the *Findlay Courier*" (Senator Kerry, 2004, p. 1).

Although Senator Kerry mentioned Ohio-specific events in his Xenia speech, these few mentions do not catapult Ohio to a central position within the political dialogue. Thus, again the candidate used Ohio as a backdrop for political discussion while the area's print media focused predominately on the issues affecting the region.

Overall, the relationship between the senator's speech in Greene County and the political coverage in the *Yellow Springs News* is relatively similar to the other studies. Again, the senator's speech matched expectations, focusing almost exclusively on domestic issues. What was unexpected was the extent to which the political news coverage in the *Yellow Springs News*

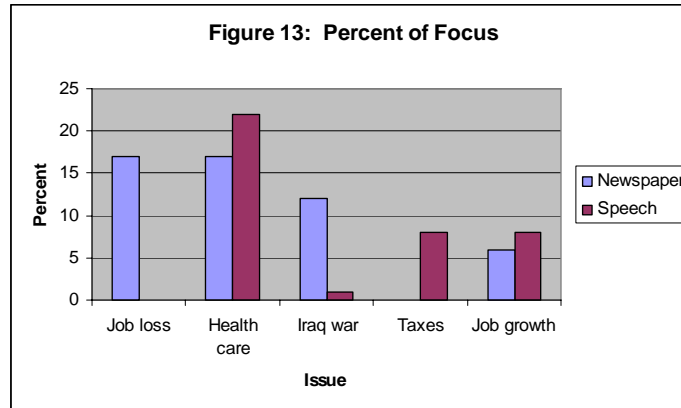
was predominately domestically-focused as well, especially since Yellow Springs is in an extremely Republican county.

Beyond this similar domestic focus, the two sources did mirror one another on the framing of health care, but in regard to other political issues, analysis offered no support for a further relationship. However, it is important to note that the senator avoided relying on blanket statements, as seen with President Bush in Ironton, Ohio. Instead, Senator Kerry discussed specific issues, such as the flu vaccine shortage. Thus, while it is clear the senator's specific issue focus was not mirrored by the local news coverage, he did have a specific issue focus. This is an interesting difference between the two candidates. Overall, there is minimal evidence to support a relationship between the local print media and Senator Kerry's visit beyond, again, a similar domestic focus.

Case 7: President Bush in Stark County

October 22, 2004, President Bush stopped in distinctly Democratic Canton, Ohio, giving a speech at the Canton Palace Theater. Less than 12 miles from Canton is Massillon, a town with approximately one-third the population of Canton, which publishes a daily newspaper, *The Independent*. Again, neither the president's speech nor the newspaper's coverage coincided with expectations.

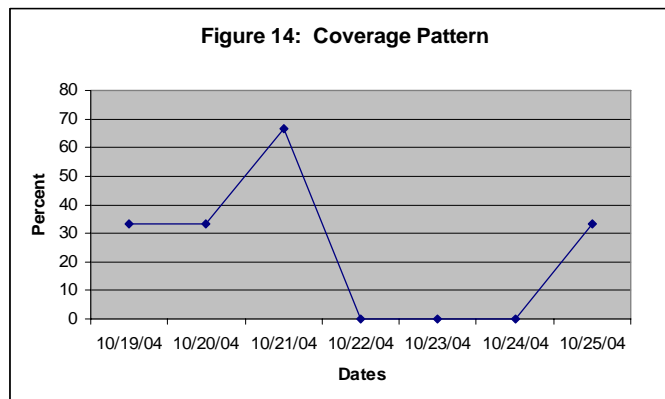
While the president did mention foreign issues, domestic issues were again the centerpiece of his speech, as Table 1 illustrates. In fact, his top three issues were again domestic – health care, taxes, and job growth. *The Independent* not only matched the president's domestic focus but also mirrored some of the president's top issues. Figure 13 illustrates the top three issues for both the president's speech and newspaper coverage in the days after his visit.



* Neither source discussed both taxes and job loss.

While it is clear that the two do not completely mirror one another in regard to the issues covered, the issues of health care and job growth accounted for similar amounts of the issues discussed. Yet, it begs notation that the issue of job growth accounted for less than 10% of the political coverage in either source. Beyond this notation, it was hypothesized that such framing similarities would exist in regard to rural news coverage mirroring the candidate's message; however, I had hypothesized this would occur in regard to foreign issues. Thus, this relationship in regard to domestic issues was unexpected.

While there is evidence in support of a slight relationship in respect to specific issues, there is no evidence in support of a positive relationship with respect to the amount of news coverage and the president's visit. Instead, the political news coverage plummeted to zero in the days after the candidate's visit, which was unexpected. It must be noted that no newspaper was published on October 23 and 24, the reason for which is unknown since the newspaper is daily. Yet, there was a publication on October 22, none of which consisted of political news. Thus, it seems apparent that the president's visit had no positive impact on the volume of political news coverage. Figure 14 illustrates the pattern of news coverage in the days surrounding the president's visit.



Evidence of a relationship between the area’s news coverage and the president’s speech is again not supported in regard to Ohio’s role in the political discourse in the area. Although it appears, on the surface, that President Bush’s speech focused almost exclusively on Ohio, extensive analysis proved that this was not the case.

Much of the president’s speech in Canton was not given by him, but rather Ohioans the president had invited to offer their perspective on the issues. For instance, Dr. Schwieterman, a family practice physician, from Mercer County Ohio told his story in regard to medical liability.

“For the past three years, we’ve pretty much done OB at cost. What we took in is what we paid out in malpractice, and this year [after a frivolous lawsuit] our premiums went up 40 percent, and it became a point where we could not afford to maintain a small business...” (in the speech Bush 2004, p. 4).

President Bush used Dr. Schwieterman as an example of how frivolous lawsuits are destroying the health care system. The president also asked three other Ohio doctors and a local CPA to explain his health savings account plan. The president used these citizens’ stories to assert the need for medical liability reform in America. However, beyond local anecdotes, the president offered no specific discussion of Ohio-specific issues or how to solve these. Instead, the president used Ohio as an example that such issues exist. Although on the surface these anecdotes appear to mean this speech was entirely focused on Ohio, this is untrue. Again, the

president is discussing national issues, and is simply using local examples to prove that such problems exist in America. Also, the actual part of the speech that President Bush gave himself, made no mention of Ohio. Understanding this, it is important to note that this speech, while Ohio is mentioned more frequently than in his previous speeches, Ohio is not given the role of centerpiece, but is yet again used to further the candidate's national agenda.

Coverage in *The Independent* was, as expected, extremely focused on Ohio. Although *The Independent* did not use local examples to further its mention of medical liability reform, the newspaper did use local examples for other issues. For instance, the article titled "No raise for employees in Navarre" discussed how wages in the Massillon area were falling while the area's cost of living rose. The article did not focus on the nation as a whole or even Ohio as a whole, but used employees from the neighboring area of Navarre as examples of the issue. Thus, yet again, the candidate and the print media did not offer Ohio the same level of importance within the political discourse.

Overall, this case study supported several but not all of the hypotheses. That is, there was no increase in news coverage in *The Independent* in the days following President Bush's visit but instead a sharp decrease. As in the previous case studies neither the president's speech nor the newspaper focused on foreign issues, but rather both focused on domestic issues. While this similar domestic focus was seen in the previous rural case studies as well, in regard to the relationship between President Bush's speech and *The Independent*, several of the domestic issues discussed not only overlapped in topic but prevalence as well.

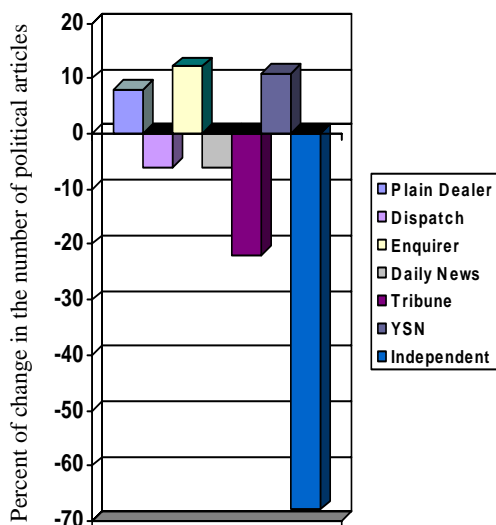
With respect to Ohio's role within the political discourse, the hypothesis was again supported, yet this case study was more intricate in this regard. In his Canton speech, President Bush, did not focus on Ohio, but did invite Ohioans to offer specific examples of the existence of

national issues in Ohio. However, the president offered no Ohio-specific solutions, nor did he personally discuss Ohio. But, *The Independent* focused its political rhetoric around Ohio, as expected. In general, minimal evidence exists in support of a relationship between President Bush's speech and the political coverage in *The Independent*.

Chapter 5: Results

This chapter includes an overview of the aggregate results across the individual case studies with respect to the evidence for each of the hypotheses.

Table for H2a: Percent of Political Coverage Change after a Candidate's Visit



The table for H2a illustrates the extent to which the print media's political coverage increased in the days following a candidate's visit to the area. It must first be noted that since newspapers often vary greatly in the number of articles they publish on a given day, percentages were used to eliminate any bias that may have arisen due to this variation.

Although it was expected that both the rural and urban print media would increase their political issue coverage in the days after a visit, this was not found consistently throughout the case studies. In fact, the study found that the amount of political news coverage increased as often as it decreased after a candidate's visit. Yet, only two of these increases can arguably be attributed to the candidate's visit. Thus, the study offers no conclusive results with regard to either candidate's influence on the amount of political issue coverage whether rural or urban print media; nor, is there any evidence that inherent differences exist between rural and urban

media in regard to the amount of coverage, candidates' influence, or political rhetoric. Although there is no consistent evidence to support hypothesis H2a, this study moved beyond a candidate's influence on the amount of coverage, examining the framing of the election in both the candidates' speeches and the political news coverage.

Table for H1, H2b, H3

	Percent of Focus				Percent of Ohio-specific coverage
	Foreign %	Domestic %	Both %	Horseshoe %	
Dayton Daily News	8.5	61.7	6.4	23.4	25
Speech	18.7	80.1	1.2	0	<1
Columbus Dispatch	4.9	67.9	6.3	20.9	68.2
Speech	13.4	86.6	0	0	<1
Cincinnati Enquirer	6.2	65.6	9.4	18.8	71.9
Speech	19.5	80.5	0	0	0
Ironton Tribune	12.5	37.5	12.5	37.5	75
Speech	20	80	0	0	0
Cleveland Plain Dealer	11.6	59.4	8.7	20.3	59
Speech	1.4	98.6	0	0	<1
The Massillon Independent	0	80	20	0	50
Speech	33.3	63.3	3.3	0	<1
Yellow Springs News	0	72.7	22.7	4.5	50
Speech	1.4	98.6	0	0	<1

Table 2 presents the results of the content analysis with respect to the issue focus of each candidate's speech and the media's political coverage and the percentage of focus given to Ohio.

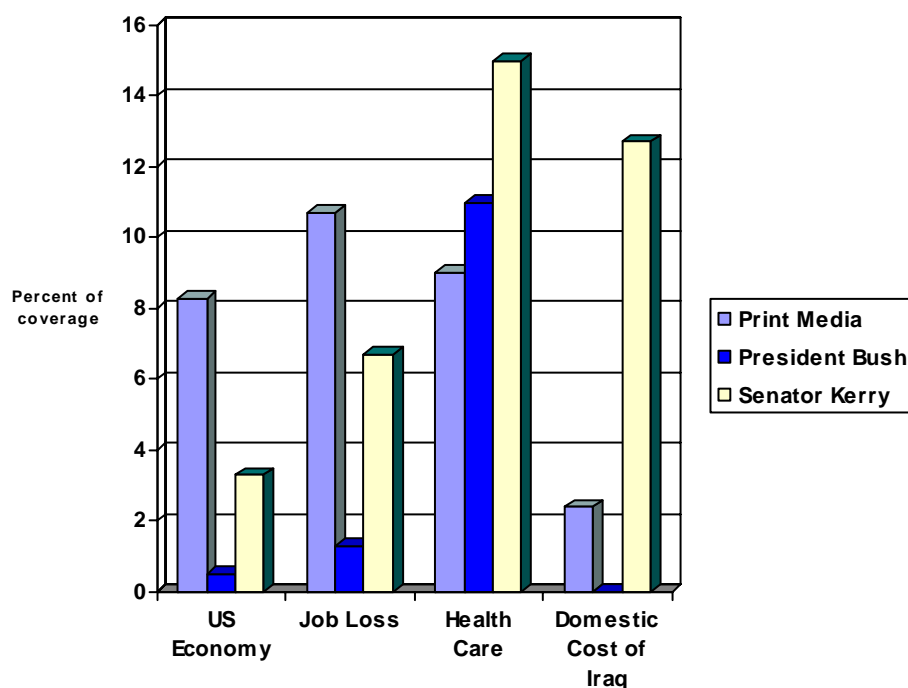
The content analysis of both candidates' Ohio speeches did not completely support the hypothesis that each candidate would focus on the issues that were found to be advantageous to him by the Pew Research Center. Rather than creating an expansive campaign, as expected, the rhetoric of the 2004 presidential campaign in Ohio was almost exclusively focused on domestic

issues. This predominate domestic focus, while expected from Senator Kerry, did not coincide with the study's expectations for President Bush's issue ownership. The content analysis of area print media found a similar exclusivity toward domestic issues. However, this finding is not meant to suggest a direct relationship between the media and the candidates.

Evidence supporting this lack of direct relationship is first also illustrated by Table 2 in that, as expected, neither the media nor the candidates offered Ohio a similar level of importance within the political discussion. As hypothesized, Ohio was the predominate focus for a majority of the print media's political news coverage; however, the candidates offered Ohio no such importance, instead denigrating the state to a platform on which to further their national agendas. However, it must be noted that Dayton is an outlier of these results since only 25% of its political coverage was Ohio specific.

To further support this lack of direct relationship between the candidates and the print media, the content analysis found no consistent evidence that the candidates and the media were offering the same issues similar importance framing, as Table 3 illustrates.

Table 3: Average of the Top Issues for Each Source



Instead, for instance, while the media, as a whole, focused much of its attention on the issue of job loss and while both candidates also mentioned job loss to some extent in their speeches, neither candidate mirrored the media's coverage of the issue; nor, did the media mirror the candidates' predominate issue focus. That is, while Senator Kerry, for instance, focused much of his attention on the domestic cost of Iraq, the print media did not follow suit. However, it must be noted that while the issue of health care did receive sizeable attention from both candidates as well as the print media, the levels of importance within the framing of the election were not the same. That is, health care was Senator Kerry's and President Bush's main issue; however, this was not the print media's main issue. Thus, although each source was discussing health care, the candidates were framing the issue as more important than the media.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Without consistent support for any of the hypotheses except Ohio's role within the political discourse, it is possible the expectations were unfounded because, after all, there is minimal research on which this study could draw. Nonetheless, the study's findings are important to understanding political dialogue; and thus, have implications beyond Ohio's political climate, reaching into the broader scope of political campaigns, media coverage, and the public's understanding of elections.

First, with respect to the broader scope of political campaigns it is important to note the study's findings regarding states' roles within presidential campaigns. Based on the content analysis of both candidates' Ohio speeches, it is apparent that even though both candidates spent much time campaigning throughout Ohio, the state was not the focus of either campaign. Instead, it seems both candidates, in an attempt to garner more national media attention, steered away from an Ohio focus, lest the national media cover their campaigns only within the context of pandering to Ohio. However, discussing issues of national importance in a state with such a strong reputation as a battleground state, would be important to the national public as well as the national media, thus allowing for greater national media attention. In essence, Ohio was merely a stage on which the candidates attempted to gain national media attention. Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that states, even battleground states, have minimal importance within presidential campaigns beyond their votes in the Electoral College.

Beyond states' roles within presidential campaigns, the results support the obvious expectations of the issue ownership theory that Senator Kerry would focus his rhetoric domestically; however, the theory itself offers minimal insight regarding President Bush's

similar domestic exclusivity. Instead, it is clear that further campaign tactics, beyond an advantageous issue platform, were present in the 2004 campaign.

Holian (2004) posed the question: "...what of the ability of candidates or parties to steal or neutralize issues..." That is, can a candidate gain ownership of an opponent's issue or at least neutralize his opponent's strength with the issue? He follows by arguing that "given the correct 'spin'" issues can essentially be stolen or neutralized by the other candidate. This is an important strategy because, if successful, the candidate can transform perceived weaknesses into strengths (Petrocik 1991, 1996; Riker 1986, 1996; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

Applying this conjecture to the 2004 campaign, President Bush could neutralize Senator Kerry's strength with domestic affairs if he could successfully "spin" such issues as supporting foreign issues. This tactic would (1) weaken Senator Kerry's ownership of domestic issues thus leaving him with little or no advantage while (2) broadening President Bush's advantageous issue base. For this approach to succeed, Holian (2004) argues that (1) President Bush must discuss the issue in a new way that is distinguishable from Senator Kerry's discourse and (2) the media, "as the primary conduit for political information," must follow President Bush's lead.

President Bush, frequently drawing on a quote from Tom Lea, framed his domestic issues around a "great day coming for America," which is in direct opposition to Senator Kerry's domestic rhetoric. Senator Kerry focused his speeches on what he called "President Bush's mistakes" and their present, negative impacts on America. President Bush succeeded in distinguishing himself from Senator Kerry by focusing on the future rather than the past. As Holian argues, President Bush's distinguishable spin on domestic issues was an important step toward neutralizing Senator Kerry's domestic advantage, but the success of this tactic hinged on the media following suit. However, the content analysis yielded no consistent results that the

print media, neither rural nor urban, discussed political issues with a focus on the future. Instead, the newspapers focused on what was currently occurring and why with respect to specific political issues. Basically, the newspapers were similar to Senator Kerry's focus on the past and the present with minimal regard for the future.

The third requirement for a candidate to successfully neutralize an opponent's advantage is that public opinion must shift from favoring one candidate's ability to handle the issue to favoring another's ability to manage the same issue (Holian 2004). As the Pew Research Center poll suggests, this third requirement did not occur, and instead, Senator Kerry continued to lead President Bush within the domestic realm. Thus, President Bush's attempt to neutralize Senator Kerry's strength failed. Yet this attempt, while a strategic failure on the part of President Bush, may account for the close race between Senator Kerry and President Bush both nationally and in Ohio.

More important than the nature of the race itself is issue framing's influence on the public. President Bush was framing domestic issues differently than Senator Kerry and the media, so how would the public's knowledge of the election be influenced by these disparate foci? Without in-depth public opinion data it is impossible for this study to delve deeply into the public's judgment of the election; however, it is possible to make broad assessments of the possible implications of such campaign tactics on the public's knowledge of the election and the issues at stake.

Jerit, Barabas and Bolsen (2006) found that less-educated people do not rely on newspapers for political information because, as they found, newspapers rely more heavily on experts than does broadcast media, making the information presented more arduous. Also, newspapers require active involvement in absorbing information which supports the argument

that gaining knowledge from print media is more difficult, and thus less-attractive to, uneducated people (Jerit et. al 2006). This is an important distinction because it is arguable that both educated and uneducated people attend campaign events, specifically candidate speeches. This education disparity in those who attend candidate speeches is important in understanding how the public might evaluate the campaign and the issues at stake.

The important question that remains is: how is the public's knowledge of the election influenced when the issue framing in both the print media and a candidate's speech does not coincide? However, to clarify, this thesis does not study the public's knowledge but only some of the relevant information that might be considered by at least some members of the public when attempting to learn what the election concerns. Thus, the focus is on studying the raw materials of public learning, not public learning itself while also analyzing competing agendas of the press and the candidates. It must be noted that this study does not analyze other forms of media beyond print, thus further research is required to fully answer this question. However, this research does lend itself to a broad understanding of the public's relationship with the print media and their possible understanding of the election.

The implications of this contrasting issue framing in regard to President Bush and the print media are less pertinent for the less-educated members of the public. The less-educated members of the audience at a candidate's speech will be minimally, if at all, influenced by the print media's issue framing because they do not regularly attend to this type of media. Thus, these audience members would be less influenced by disparate issue framing in the print media and the candidate's speech. Instead, it can be argued that this audience could be more positively influenced by the candidate's message because they would not be receiving conflicting messages from the print media. However, another possibility, which is beyond the scope of this study,

must be noted. If inter-media agenda-setting is occurring, the print media's framing of the campaign could influence broadcaster's framing of the campaign. If this occurred, less-educated members of the public could be influenced by diverse issue framing because they attend more regularly to broadcast media which would, as the print media did, frame the election differently than President Bush.

However, the presence or lack thereof of inter-media agenda-setting is not as important for the more educated members of the audience. For the educated, who more often rely on the print media for information, if the newspaper and the candidate's speech do not coincide with regard to issue framing, how does this person evaluate the campaign, the candidates, and the issues?

While this research cannot delve into the phenomenon that this framing disparity may create, it is important to note the obvious possibility for voter uncertainty. It is arguable that educated members of the public have three choices: (1) choose to align themselves with the print media and thus Senator Kerry, (2) ignore the print media and align themselves with President Bush, or (3) attend to both President Bush and the print media and become accustomed to internal ambiguity. If the latter is the conclusion, on what does the voter base his opinion and are these opinions stable and consistent? Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) argue that political knowledge helps voters build stable, consistent opinions. Yet, the question remains: how does a voter create his opinions when the media and the candidates frame the issues at stake in the election differently?

Jerit, Barabas and Bolsen (2006) argue that variations in media coverage do little to offset the information advantage associated with more educated members of the public. Yet, in Ohio during the 2004 presidential campaign, it was this group, the more educated who consumed news

through the print media, who would have been at risk of being more uncertain about which issues were most important in the election. That is, should the voter focus on the present and who had made the decisions which led the country to its current state in 2004, or should the voter focus on which candidate is more apt to lead the nation into the future, forgetting the decisions that led the country to its 2004 condition? Under these circumstances, the print media and the candidates were helping to create uncertainty for those who attended to both sources, while attending to only one source might have lessened the opportunity for ambiguity on the part of the voter and his understanding of the issues that were most important in the 2004 presidential campaign between President Bush and Senator Kerry. Thus, this study concludes that campaign tactics and a minimal relationship between the print media and the candidates with respect to issue framing and Ohio's importance could have hindered the public's understanding of the election.

Chapter 7: Limitations

While it is arguable that the popularity of newspapers has been surpassed by television, the importance of print media cannot be overlooked. Although it has been found that viewing television news is a consistent predictor of knowing the issue stances of candidates, the contributions of print media cannot be downgraded because virtually all studies have found newspapers increase voters' political knowledge (e.g. Chaffee and Frank 1996; Chaffee, Zhao, and Leshner 1995). Based on these findings with respect to print media as well its availability to this researcher, this study did not analyze other media. Thus, an important limitation, which was previously mentioned, is that framing theory was not applied to other forms of media, including television news, radio broadcasts, political commercials, or Internet news. Because of this limitation, this study cannot make expansive assertions across media which would be important for further research. This limitation is important, especially for future research, because inter-media agenda setting suggests that newspapers may influence the manner in which television news covers issues and events, such as campaigns. Understanding the extent to which such agenda setting was present in the 2004 presidential campaign might provide for more expansive assertions regarding the relevant information that might be considered by at least some members of the public when attempting to learn what the election concerns.

A further limitation of the study is that with respect to the public's opinion of each candidate's advantaged issues, the study relies on national data from the Pew Research Center rather than public opinion data specifically relating to Ohioans. It is also important to note that the Pew Center did not deconstruct the demographics of its respondents by state or by area population. Thus, the questions remain (1) did Ohioans, as a whole, coincide with the national trend, and (2) did respondents from both rural and urban areas share the same opinion of each

candidate's advantage? Although there is exit polling data to answer these questions, this study could not readily employ such data.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Although this study cannot make expansive assumptions because of the limitation in media use, the study's findings lend themselves to creating a solid foundation regarding candidates' relationship with the print media and the possible influence of this relationship on the voting public. This study found minimal consistent evidence of a palpable relationship between the candidates and the local print media, even though the issue framing of the print media and Senator Kerry was often somewhat aligned. However, this study cannot offer conclusive evidence as to whether this alignment supports an intentional relationship with one another, with public opinion, or was it simply a coincidence since it is arguable that the nature of print news is to focus on the present not the future? While the answer to this question remains unclear, beyond a similar domestic focus and non-futuristic approach, there is no more of a relationship between Senator Kerry and the print media or President Bush and this media. Also, there is no relationship between the candidates and Ohio. Instead, it is clear that even as a battleground state, Ohio's presence within the election was reduced to a number of votes in the Electoral College rather than the state's current condition. If this is true for such a highly contested state, the rhetorical question begs asking: what about the importance of non-battleground states outside of their presences in the Electoral College?

If state's have minimal importance within the election, individual communities have even less importance, especially those in more rural areas. Although both candidates did campaign throughout rural and urban Ohio, only President Bush actually made a speech in a rural community. This speech, however, was little more than blanket statements about improving America. Never, in any other speech, did either candidate offer the local public such a minimal issue focus. Is this because the president felt confident in his level of support in such a

traditionally Republican, rural area, or does this lack of substance lend itself to stereotypes regarding rural voters? Whatever the answer, the findings offer evidence to support the argument that not only do individual states play minor roles in a national election but rural communities play an even more trifling role than their urban counterparts in such a campaign. To better understand why the candidates' campaigns were managed this way, one needs to interview the candidates' communication directors or campaign managers to understand the theory behind why the candidates spoke where they did and why their speeches were written differently depending on the area the event was held.

Overall, due to the fact that there exists minimal previous research on which to draw, this study's findings will assist in providing a foundation for further research on this topic. The goal for future endeavors will be to understand the extent to which the voting public is aware of the discrepancies in framing between the candidates and the print media while examining the extent to which this disparity influences voters' decisions. Further research will also delve more deeply into the importance of individual states, drawing comparisons between this study's findings regarding states' levels of importance during the presidential campaign and states' roles within presidential primaries.

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